

FS Direct

Direct Communication to Foreign Service Employees and Family Members
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<http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/index.html>

FLO Homepage on the Internet

<http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo>

Email FLO – flo@state.gov



EMPLOYMENT

[*The Network*](#) - the FLO webpage, updated monthly, provides job opportunities and listings in the Washington, DC area.



INFORMATION & RESOURCES

FLO Publications on the Internet may be found at

<http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/rsrscs/pubs/>



FS FAMILY MEMBERS

Job Seekers Network Group supports the DC area job seeker.

Calendar- <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/37848.pdf>



FS DIRECT SUBSCRIPTIONS

To subscribe, please use the following links:

Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c9156.htm>

Intranet: <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/FLO/FLOSubscription.html>

Via AAFSW: Visit the FLO area of the AAFSW web site at <http://www.aafsw.org> and click on FLO newsletters.

FS Direct is also available on the FLO Internet web site at <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/rsrscs/pubs/c5709.htm>

Notes from the Field

Letter from Kabul, Afghanistan

In 1978 Kabul was my first Foreign Service assignment and my husband's second. I loved living there at the time, but in July 1979, even though I was five months pregnant, I was evacuated because of the growing insurgency against Soviet and communist domination of the country, five months before the invasion of Soviet forces. I did not want to leave, but I had to. I left my heart there.

I spoke some Dari then and I was able to travel often around the country during our first six months. There was an incredibly talented international community, and even with the tragic killing of our ambassador, Spike Dubs, the community held together. Now, decades later and after a Dari refresher teacher Hafiz Latify), I still sense then, and it certainly return to Kabul to help the their Dark Age. Of course but I would not change this husband could be with me).



I coordinate English this means that I am among embassy who have the fortified embassy compound universities, schools, and taught. I cannot just go out would like, and as I did in I remember outside of Kabul. Because of the presence of so many more people in the city -- and so many more lights -- the sky is not so clear and close to me as it was in '79. The roses, though, are still as fragrant as they were when I was here last. The experience I am living now is still very satisfying.

course at FSI (still with my old speak the language. It made makes sense now for my Afghan people come out of Kabul is not Paris or Rome, place for any other (unless my

Language (EL) programs and the few officers in our chance to go out of our to meet people. I visit other places where English is and mingle with people as I the past. I cannot go to places

It is so rewarding to be able to make a difference in some teacher's daily life. Teachers (particularly EL teachers) here have few resources to teach with. But they have an incredible stamina and willingness to help their students and to grow in their careers. Some days I feel very sad because my office, like others, has very limited funds, and the country desperately needs quality English Language programs. I cannot give or do as much as I would like to, but I have great colleagues to work with. The other agencies - USAID, the PRTs, the ARG, USDA, just to mention a few- have great officers, and everybody who is here is highly motivated to make a difference in this country in the short time we all are going to be here.

When I arrived I lived in a "hooch," that is, in a container. I had created my nest. Boxes were tucked under the bed and every single inch in my hooch was taken by my consumables and clothes (my husband and children always accuse me of taking too many clothes and shoes when I travel, but this time I had to live for one year wearing only what I brought with me). I had rearranged my modus vivendi. The office was a two-minute walk

and -- listen to this -- the gym was two minutes away from my hooch. Same distance for the tennis court. I went to the gym almost every morning and I have never felt so fit. I was in the hooch only for three months and now I have moved into one of the brand new apartments within the Embassy compound. These apartments are very comfortable, with a very nice kitchen. Unfortunately we still have to eat the cafeteria food since it is difficult for us to purchase ingredients for cooking.

It was difficult to leave the comfortable academic environment offered by Duke University in North Carolina, where I was working during my husband's brief assignment as diplomat-in-residence. I was a professor of the Italian language there and I had just started to be recognized for my work as a good language teacher.

Our two children, Barbara, our daughter (she recently turned 26), a doctor in physical therapy in Atlanta, and our 24-year old son, Giorgio, who is getting a Master's degree in Fine Arts, encouraged me to come to Kabul.

"Mom, at your age, when will you have another chance to go on a new adventure on your own? Mom, take the risk and go. We know you will make the best of this assignment." Not only they were right, but so far this assignment has proven to be incredibly rewarding. I know there are many other spouses out there who are qualified to do jobs in different parts of the world while their husbands are assigned in unaccompanied posts. So I hope they will take the risk and enjoy the opportunity to serve our country, on their own, in a different country from that in which their spouse is serving. I just wanted to share with you my thoughts about my assignment here.

Regards, Beatrice Litt

Beatrice is the English Language Program coordinator in the Public Affairs Office of the American Embassy in Kabul Afghanistan. She arrived in Kabul in July 2005 on a one-year assignment. She is not a Foreign Service Officer or Specialist, but represents the Director General's program to utilize the experience and skills of Foreign Service spouses, especially those whose spouses are FSOs assigned to unaccompanied posts. Beatrice applied for the job when it became available and was hired.

Beatrice's husband, David C. Litt, the Political-Military Counselor at the Embassy in Baghdad, is one of five former ambassadors, not including Ambassador Khalilzad, assigned in Iraq for a year. He, as well, arrived in Baghdad last July.



Employment



To all PIT Buyback Applicants

As I mentioned in my letter to all applicants dated December 1, 2005, the Office of Personnel Management has now issued guidance that will allow us to start forwarding your applications to the Retirement Accounts Division in Charleston for further processing. The Office of Retirement is responsible for determining whether your service meets all the requirements of the PIT buyback program, and the Retirement Accounts Division will calculate the amount of the deposit, plus interest, you would owe to purchase credit toward retirement for your service.

Applicants who were eligible family members and who served in part-time, intermittent or temporary (PIT) appointments at U.S. missions overseas between January 1, 1989 and May 23, 1998 may apply to obtain credit toward retirement under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) even if they are no longer working for the Federal Government and even if they are already drawing retirement benefits. If an individual who performed this type of service has died, anyone who is eligible for a survivor annuity under FERS based on the service of that individual may apply to obtain FERS credit for that service.

Individuals who wish to obtain FERS credit for their service need to complete a regular application for service credit on Standard Form 3108. In completing the SF 3108 applicants should list in box 10 of Part A only the periods of government service performed abroad that they seek to credit. The total amount of service listed must equal 90 days or more.

In addition to completing the SF 3108, individuals seeking credit for their service in a PIT position abroad during this period need to prepare a cover letter. The cover letter should identify the applicant as either the person who performed the service or the survivor of a person who performed the service. The cover letter should indicate if the applicant is an employee, a former employee, or an annuitant. If the applicant is a survivor, the cover letter should include identifying information on the individual who performed the service and should indicate whether the survivor is currently receiving a survivor annuity. We will attach to this letter samples of cover letters from OPM showing the kinds of information individuals should include in their cover letters.

We will address other issues in future letters to applicants. These include documentation of your status as an eligible family member, applications by individuals who no longer work for the Department of State or who were employed as PITs by agencies other than the Department of State and applications by former PIT employees of the U.S. Information Agency. We will also discuss limitations on the definition of U.S. missions abroad. Finally, we will explain appeal procedures if you do not agree with a decision by the Office of Retirement regarding crediting your service toward retirement.

Thank you for your patience as we work to establish this very complex program.

From David B. Dlouhy
Administrator, Foreign Service Retirement and Disability Fund
Director, Office of Retirement HR/RET

Visit FLO's Internet website for:

Further Instructions <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/59745.pdf>

Sample Cover Letter Language <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/59459.pdf>



Attention FS Teens: AWAL Needs a Correspondent



It's that time again!! **Wings of AWAL**, the quarterly Foreign Service teen worldwide newsletter, is looking for its next teen at post who loves to write!! What are the issues for teens at your post? What do teens do for fun? Are you interested in current events? You could be the next **Wings of Awal** "AT POST" teen correspondent. If chosen, you'll be expected to inform us of the teen-related issues and trends at post, write your opinions, tell us about the school and maybe even interview some friends for the next edition of the newsletter. Overseas Foreign Service high school students are eligible.

You will get \$50 when ALL work is turned in by the newsletter edition deadline!! EASY MONEY!! GREAT FOR COLLEGE APPLICATIONS!!

Deadline: Until filled--first come, first picked--apply now for Spring Newsletter!!

To apply, send three story ideas you'd like to see covered in **Wings of AWAL** related to Foreign Service life and tell us how you would report each article and why these issues are important to teens.

E-mail your story ideas along with your full name, post, birth date, grade, school, and address to newsletter@fsyf.org. Please send your questions to the same email. (Sponsored by McInearney Associates, Inc. Realtors).



Wanted: Foreign Service Stories from Teens

Teens, do you have a story to tell about growing up in the Foreign Service? Were you an eyewitness to history in the making, have a unique cultural experience that you'll never forget, or some other story about your life in the Foreign Service you'd like to share?

The Department's youth-oriented website, www.future.state.gov, is looking for some fresh stories to update their site. Currently, approximately 40 essays written by Foreign Service youth are online. To read their stories, go to the homepage, click on "Who We Are", then "Meet the Children of Diplomats Overseas."

This is a great opportunity to record your histories as part of the story of American diplomacy and to present a teen's perspective on what it is like living in a foreign country. You may submit your article to either flo@state.gov or to fsyf@msn.com.

And oh by the way, it won't hurt to put on your college applications that you are a published writer on the www.future.state.gov website! You will receive a letter from the Family Liaison Office thanking you for your contributions. Did I mention this will look good on college applications? Hope to have my inbox flooded soon!

Becky Grappo
Education and Youth Officer
Family Liaison Office
flo@state.gov



Foreign Service Youth “The World Before Me” Original Art Contest

Themes: Your favorite place anywhere in the world or your favorite animal

Deadline: February 24, 2006

Age Categories: 5-8 9-12 13-17

Prizes: 1st Place: \$500 SDFCU share certificate in each age category
2nd Place: \$250 SDFCU savings account in each category

Instructions • Any and all art forms and materials
• If paper is used, size should be between 4x6” and 11x17”

Rules: • Open to **ALL** Foreign Service Youth-- ages of 5-17.
• One entry per individual.
• Send your entries to:

Melanie Newhouse, Executive Director
Foreign Service Youth Foundation
12815 Flack Street, Silver Spring, MD 20906

- Entries must be labeled with your parent/guardian's name, your full name, birth date, phone number, email, post address and the title of your artwork.
- Entries will be judged on creativity and artistic expression.
- Entries become the property of State Department Federal Credit Union and the Foreign Service Youth Foundation. Art will be auctioned to benefit **Credit Unions for Kids/Cherry Blossom 10 mile Run Gala** fundraiser for the Children's Miracle Network, and used in promotional materials.

For more information, contact the [Foreign Service Youth Foundation](http://fsyf@fsyf.org) at fsyf@fsyf.org or 301-404-6655.



Support Services

Interagency Roundtable Meets



On December 16, over 60 representatives from 17 departments, agencies and family advocacy groups gathered at Main State to network, share resources and brainstorm solutions for supporting personnel and families – as the Inter Agency Roundtable (IART) has been doing several times a year since 1990. This session's main topic was Support for Families on Unaccompanied Tours; the Family Liaison Office, with assistance from the Office of Casualty

Assistance, organized the day's events. FLO Director Ann Greenberg kicked off the IART, followed by remarks from Deputy Assistant Secretary John O'Keefe and a Welcome from Under Secretary for Management Henrietta Fore. A panel of three spouses who are "veterans" of unaccompanied tours - Pat Schofield, Clare Shukan and Becky Grappo - shared their personal experiences. Martha Rees of USAID, Judi Crane of DIA and Nan Leininger of FLO (Program Specialist for Unaccompanied Tours) spoke briefly on what their respective offices were doing to support UT families; the discussion was then open to the assembled IART. Several frustrations were shared by different offices, i.e. difficulties in identifying and reaching out to family members, overcoming the perceived "stigma" of asking for help, and lack of adequate resources. Agencies that had found or created useful materials were generous in sharing them.

Small working groups convened after a break to discuss: Family Member Employment; Disaster Assistance/Contingency Planning; Mission and Goals of IART; and Support for Families on Unaccompanied Tours. The next IART meeting will be in May, hosted by the National Security Agency in Ft. Meade, MD. The main topic will again be Support for Families on Unaccompanied Tours, with additional small groups to be determined. Minutes of the whole session are available through Nan Leininger, LeiningerNW@state.gov.



Take Note -

Federal Long Term Care Insurance



The Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP) provides long term care insurance for Federal employees and their parents, parents-in-law, stepparents, spouses, and adult children. If you're newly employed in a position that conveys eligibility for FEHB coverage, you can apply for long term care insurance, even if you don't enroll in the

FEHB Program. Check with your human resources office if you are unsure about your eligibility.

Long-term care insurance is **NOT** just for older people. Forty percent of the persons receiving long-term care are working-age adults between the ages of 18 and 64, with many of these people receiving it as they recover from an accident or disabling disease. The cost of the insurance is based on your age when you apply - the older you are when you apply, the higher the premiums. Certain medical conditions, or combination of conditions, will prevent some people from being approved for coverage.

You can read more about the FLTCIP, apply for it, find out how much it cost and review Frequently Asked Questions at www.ltcfeds.com.



Foreign Service Exam Dates

Registration for the April 8, 2006 Foreign Service Written Exam is now open. Please go to <http://careers.state.gov/officer/join/examinfo.html> for more information, and to start the online registration process. **The deadline for submitting completed registrations is before 5:00 p.m. Central Time on March 1, 2006, for overseas test sites, and before 5:00 p.m. Central Time on March 8, 2006, for domestic test sites.**

Please visit the <http://careers.state.gov> website and click on Foreign Service Officer to learn more about the FSWE, order a Study Guide, or get information on how to prepare for the exam.



Early Morning Language Classes



Purpose: The FSI Early Morning Language Program is for Federal employees with a job-related need for proficiency in a foreign language. Early Morning training should not be viewed as a substitute for intensive language study, but rather as “head start,” “maintenance,” or “refresher” training.

When: Classes meet Monday through Friday, from 7:30 a.m. to 8:40 a.m. The semester begins February 21, 2006 and runs through June 16, 2006. (Please note that the session begins on a Tuesday following the Monday Federal holiday).

Where: Classes will be held at FSI on the campus of the George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center (SA-42), 4000 Arlington Boulevard in Arlington, Virginia, at Main State, and a very limited number of Arabic, French, Russian, and Spanish classes in SA-44. Please indicate your preference on the application. **Family members and non-State employees may opt for class in the Harry S. Truman Main State building only if they arrange for an escort to and from class.**

Languages Offered: Early Morning training is offered in twelve languages. The number of Early Morning classes in some languages is limited as follows: **ONE classes each in Dari, Farsi, German, Italian, Japanese, Pashto, and Portuguese. Classes are also offered in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, and Spanish.**

Admissions Policy: Classes are generally limited to six students. In all cases, there must be at least three qualified applicants at approximately the same proficiency level and for the same venue to justify starting a class. FSI may need to contact some applicants by telephone before making final admission decisions. If more requests are received than can be accommodated, preference will be given to those applicants whose need for the language is most immediate and directly job-related. Eligible family members may enroll on a space available basis. **Family member applications must be signed by the employee's supervisor and Career Development Officer or bureau training officer.**

Students are required to attend at least 80% of class hours to remain enrolled or receive credit for the training. Bureaus are assessed a penalty when employees fail to complete the program.

Registration: Since Early Morning training is a voluntary program, prospective students have the responsibility for correct and timely registration. Two documents are required: (1) An Agency Request Form, and (2) an Application Form (see the Department of State Intranet address <http://fsi.state.gov/courses/default.asp?Heading=Early%20Morning%20Language%20Courses>.) When both have been completed and signed, they should be submitted to:

Office of the Registrar, Room F2210
Foreign Service Institute
The George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center (SA-42)
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20522-4201

Deadline: To be considered, both agency request forms and applications must be received by the FSI Registrar no later than February 10, 2006.



Pay into Health Plan Five Years before Retirement



FEDERAL REPORT

by Mike Causey

December 13, 2005 - Of the 9 million people who participated in the federal insurance-hunting season that just ended, only a few shot themselves in the foot.

So who lost out? Here's an e-mail from a fed who is four years too late.

He asked: "I am going to retire, from [the Department of Health and Human Services], on January 3, 2007. I have been with my wife's insurance plan (General Motors) for 21 years. Now if GM fails ... will I be able to return to the insurance roles with the federal family?"

The short answer: Probably not.

Assuming he took our advice and enrolled before the deadline (which was Dec. 12), he will have to work another four years to qualify for Federal Employees Health Benefit Program coverage in retirement. For retirement coverage, feds must be enrolled in any one of the FEHBP plans for the five years before retirement. Period.

Many feds make the mistake of piggybacking on a private-sector spouse's health plan -- which may be better, cheaper, whatever -- until their final year of federal service. Then they plan to switch to the FEHBP thinking they can cover themselves and their family for life. But they can't.

So if you've been skimping on your federal health care premiums -- either not paying them or paying only for a single plan when you are a family man or woman -- you had better stay healthy and, in some cases, be mentally and physically prepared to work a lot longer than you planned.



Foreign Service Children's "Valentine's Day Potluck"



Show the Love in February! Join the Foreign Service Youth Foundation in celebrating Valentine's Day on **Sunday, February 5, 2006** at the Oakwood Apartments Capitol Room, 501 N. Roosevelt Blvd., Falls Church, Virginia.

Foreign Service teens are welcome to help with games and crafts for children and toddlers. Attendees are asked to please bring a main dish or dessert to share. FSYP will provide everything else! For more information or to RSVP contact FSYP@fsyf.org or call (301) 404-6655.

